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The problem with Death world's...

 

Death worlds. The most overused term in the galaxy. I hate it.

We all use it. All nine of the sentient, intelligent life forms in the galaxy ALL thought their world was a 'death world'.

And technically speaking yes they are all correct. Every planet wherein sentient life has arisen has been ideal for them and certain death for all alien life forms.

So technically ALL life bearing planets are 'death worlds'. Take my planet for example. The gravity is so painfully high compared to the other worlds, any alien life form upon the surface is almost incapable of movement (without mechanical help).

Or then there is Strodam- it's atmosphere is life bearing and awesome for a myriad of homegrown species and ecosystems; everything from off-world takes one look and dies from all the arsenic.

Yeltrab has vast, abundant oceans, which team with life and some of the most complex environmental ecosystems known. The self same oceans also tend to dissolve anything that hasn't had a few billion years evolutionary protection. Even our machines dissolve in the sulphuric goop of Yeltrab's waters.

Earth has so much oxygen in it, we are constantly amazed the whole planet doesn't combust. Grea's electromagnetic storms destroy anything that hasn't adapted and developed a proximal sense to know when a strike will happen. Urata's ice cold pitch black oceans contain whole cities at pressures not seen outside of the inner part of gas giants.

And speaking of gas giants? The ♦ exist as a civilisation floating amidst ammonium clouds and hydrogen thermals. You leave your ship anywhere on T'g and you die very quickly.

And of course the solar radiation that life on Huleian thrives upon, is instantly fatal to any and all living creatures not from Huleian.

Each and everyone of our worlds is a paradise. To us. The residents. The species who grew up there. Each is filled with abundant life in countless myriad forms, which through billions of years of evolution have evolved to live there. And everything else? Dies.

Not nice death either. It's usually horrific.

So yeah.

'Death worlds'.

Silly name really.

And THEN you have to consider that these places are the literal oasis of life out in space. For each of the nine worlds? There are about 250 million places where it was too brutal for any kind of life to emerge.

Dead worlds.

Either too cold. Or too hot. Or no atmosphere. Or too much atmosphere. Nothing lives on them.

And in-between? The eternal darkness. The void. The gap between the stars. Which, you know, kills everything. Except a few extremophile bacteria. But even they can only last a few hundred years before even they die.

So, the bottom line is each of the species has had to, at one point or another, realise that yes their world IS a 'death world'... but so is everyone else's.

Of course we all wonder- which one of us has the tougher death world? I mean just for bragging rights.

Yeah. ALL of us want bragging rights. It's almost impossible to judge really but sentience being sentience we found a way. Of course we did.

So how did we discovered a way to brag?

Contamination.

Because obviously while we are aware of it, and we all take such things seriously, every one of our probes/scout ships/diplomatic cutters/trade craft/encounter suits? They all ended up being covered in microscopic life forms who 'piggy back' as the humans say, along with them. Hidden in nooks and hard to reach places. And there they wait until our probes/scout ships/diplomatic cutters/trade craft/encounter suits reach another one of the nine world's and then? Well as the Herphlunt say 'They try and swim in new waters'.

There have been over 60,000 documented cases of microbial life forms from one planet contaminating previously pristine alien ecosystems over the centuries.

Luckily- none has led to the alien microbes doing devastating things. In fact? All died. Eventually.

But as I said, sentience being sentience, while all of us were aghast and horrified to have done this, we all secretly hoped our little microbes could or would last longer on the other worlds than other species microbes would last on ours.

And this is why we ended up with the 'Adaptability Numbers' aka the 'Teshunn Scale' aka 'The Death World Score'.

Like many, I bet you assume that the Death World Score is some complicated formula right? It isn't. Sure it is complex but at its heart is a real simple equation.

So, every single contamination was tracked and logged and categorised and, each category was placed into new criteria and more data was analysed and eventually you get the two numbers. The Death World Score is honestly just two numbers.

The first number was based on how long a certain planets little microbes could last in the new ecosphere. This was the hardest thing to work out. Why? You try find a universal time signature we could all agree upon using. One day on Grea was less than half a day on Strodam, which was shorter than Earth's and Earth's day is 347 times shorter than a single day on *T'g*. The Herphlunt of Urata don't even count 'days' as you know, they never saw their sun.

Finding a scale was hard, really hard. Trust me. Eventually, after that big trade deal, the scientists agreed to follow the merchants and we went with a Haccan day length, which of course meant we had to then translate everything into Haccan base 8 mathematics.

But once we calmed everyone's 'raised quills' we could all at least agree that with a few adjustments we could work with the Heccanian mathematical and dating system.

So with this we could roughly, all of us, agree upon a scale. So when you simplify it all down you can work out the first question: How long does a planets microbial life forms last on another world? If it gets a 1 it means it dies instantly. If it gets an 8 it means it survives and thrives and as I said, nothing gets an 8.

The second number was basically how many planets, aside from the planet of origin, could the microbes survive past a short period of time. That led to at least two species walking/rolling out of the scientific conferences on this as there are nine planets and we were having to use Haccan base 8 mathematics and they thought it was silly, but eventually we calmed them down by pointing out that if you ignore your world there are 8 OTHER planets so it fits.

So, roughly, you get two numbers from one to eight and that's your 'death world' score.

So if a microbe found on the ♦world survives for a few hours on Urata, but nowhere else, then it would be a 2.1 (first number how long the microbial life form lasts, second being number of planets it can exist upon beyond its own). With me so far? Good.

My planets microbes come in at a standard 4.4. They can last a while but only on about half the planets. On the rest of them? Die instantly.

Now the microbial extremophiles from Strodam comes in with a 7 for the first number but an overall 7.3 for its adaptation. It's microbes, when they can survive, are tough. So Strodam was all proud of this for a while.

Then Earth got involved. See while only getting a 5 for the first number, scores the only perfect 8. Their microbes don't last that long in other systems but they do TRY to. So an overall score of 5.8. While Strodam's last longer, Earths are able to get footholds on all.

So, OF COURSE, the Jalal of Strodam and the Humans of Earth immediately started bragging about their world being tougher. And as well as rubbing everyone's nose/ganglia/breath tube in it, honestly? I personally think this was what caused that skirmish out by the Ioscar Gas Cloud a few decades back.

I know, I know it was a row over mineral rights that escalated and after the deaths of so many everyone sat back and calmed down, but I swear to you, the Humans and Jalal have been increasingly intolerant of one another ONLY since the Adaptability Numbers arguments began.

And THEN a Ger'Zenti discovered Grean microbial life form living in waste dumped by a Heeeeeeee craft, which they maintain was a 6.8, which would give them the title of toughest microbes. But honestly, you should have seen the speed at which the Jalal and the Humans AND the ♦ contested that number. They said the microbe was only able to survive in Heeeeeeee waste material which was a nice mini Grean ecosystem and not the actual environment.

Huge rows. Seriously. The Get'Zanti expelled diplomats from Strodam because of comments made by the Hive-Queen of the Jalal; The Jalal have taken great umbrage at this and THIS is why we are facing an emergency session of the Assembly, and it doesn't help that the bloody Humans have just announced they are increasing military spending and the Heeeeeeee are suddenly all hysterical, saying they refuse to stick around because everyone is making sly comments about their digestion.

For me it illustrates just one true fact- sentient life is kinda weird. But then given what we had to do to become sentient life? I shouldn't be surprised.

So yeah anyway... death worlds.

I hate that term.